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IMPROVISING A GOVERNMENT IN PARIS IN JULY, 1789

ALTHOUGH the dominant influence which Paris exerted upon the course of the French Revolution never has been doubted, its nature has often been misconceived. Sometimes it is taken to mean the coercion or overthrow of the government by such uprisings as those of July and October, 1789, or the dictatorship of the insurrectionary communes of August, 1792, and of June, 1793. Even if the influence of Paris were so restricted and episodic, it would be instructive to indicate exactly the relation of such popular movements to the administration of the city itself and to learn whether the appearance at the Hôtel de Ville, August 10, 1792, or May 31, 1793, of a new set of delegates from the sections, superseding the existing administration, was a peculiarly Jacobinical device or was a characteristic feature of local political methods. The more one studies the politics of Paris in the early period of the Revolution, the less one is inclined to believe that the Jacobins were inventors, or that universal suffrage, introduced August 10, was responsible for party violence in 1793. It also seems beyond dispute that the spirit of domination which rendered Paris responsible for the excesses of the Terror was present in 1789, although checked at that time by the provisional government of the city and veiled under polite phrases of reverence for the decrees of the National Assembly and the person of the king. For these reasons there is no source from which new light upon the Revolution is more likely to come than from the records of the first provisional assemblies of Paris, those chosen to act for the city as a whole and those which brought together separately the voters of each of the sixty districts.

The subject has also an interest of its own. Not until October 9, 1790, was the new municipality definitively organized. Consequently for considerably more than a year after the collapse of the old government the city was under the control of an administration of which the separate parts were improvised, at first from day to day, and, until the middle of November, 1789, exposed to sudden and violent change. Quite apart from any influence Paris then exerted upon the Revolution, the period offers two features of almost equal interest—the actual construction of a provisional administra-

tion amidst the ruins of old institutions and the political controversies which agitated the people as long as the nature of the new government was not finally settled. The spectacle of a great community—the population of Paris was toward 680,000—passing suddenly from one régime to another, the first almost totally destroyed in a day and the second in no sense an outgrowth of it, must always awaken curiosity. And it is not the fighting in the streets or the revolting murders, characteristic of popular convulsions, that provoke this curiosity, it is rather the spirit and manner in which men came forward to reorganize their affairs and to master a difficult situation. The interest is heightened by the fact that these men possessed little political experience, although many of them were of great intelligence and high standing in the community. The first phase of this effort, which ended when the “electors” gave place late in July, 1789, to the “Assembly of the Representatives of the Commune”, is the subject of the present article.

I.

To comprehend the difficulty of the task that suddenly confronted the Parisians on the twelfth and thirteenth of July it is necessary to know something of the administrative system which practically disappeared in the face of insurrection. Unhappily that system was so complex—as complex as the old régime—that only the more characteristic features can be indicated.¹ Not many great names are associated in the popular imagination with the old city organization. The one generally remembered is Étienne Marcel, provost of the merchants. His strong and tragic figure evokes the illusion of a centralized government controlled by one official. In 1789 there was still a provost of the merchants, but he was far from possessing an effective jurisdiction throughout the city. Of the various powers which did share the government the most important was the lieutenant-general of the police, who stood in much the same relation to Paris as did the intendants to the “generalities”. These intendants, it will be remembered, carried out the will of the central government, and were able to act within certain limits on their own authority. Nominally the head of the police was simply another lieutenant added to the four magistrates who presided at the Châtelet. He was therefore subordinate to the provost of Paris,

¹ The general history of Paris is briefly recounted by Fernand Bournon in *Paris, Histoire, Monuments, Administration*, etc., Paris, 1888; also by H. de Pontich in the introductory portion of his *Administration de la Ville de Paris*, Paris, 1884. For a general description of the city in 1789 see H. Monin, *L'État de Paris en 1789, Études et Documents*, 1889.

who had his seat at the Châtelet but whose office, like that of the governor of Paris, had become a sinecure. The addition of a lieutenant-general of police introduced an incongruous element into the Châtelet, which was an ancient court second in dignity only to the Parlement of Paris, for he was rather an administrator than a judge. As an administrator he was immediately dependent upon the minister of the *maison du roi*, to whose department Paris was assigned. The scope of his functions appears clearly in the distribution of work among his ten bureaux.¹ It would be difficult to find a subject of administration which is not included, except those matters which touched the Seine, the river trade, the quays and bridges, and the ramparts. As head of the police he had also under him forty-eight commissioners, and an inspector for each of the twenty quarters of the city, besides detectives and informers "secretly employed and paid according to their works". Although his force was small, it was supported by the guards of the city, particularly the watch and the famous regiment of the *gardes-françaises*. But the lieutenant-general was something more than a judge, an administrator, and head of the police; it was his duty to issue ordinances, similar to those commonly passed by American municipal assemblies. These ordinances were administrative in character and were intended to carry into effect existing royal decrees.²

Although the Hôtel de Ville possessed less power than that which the Châtelet exercised through the lieutenant-general, it was the place where dwelt great traditions and toward which were turned hopes for a time when the name commune would be transformed into a political reality. The *bureau de la ville* was composed of the provost of the merchants, four aldermen, a secretary, a treasurer, and a law-officer, the *procureur du roi de la ville*. There were also twenty-four councilors, although no council in the proper sense of the word, and sixteen officers of quarters, with their subordinates. These minor officials existed in theory more than in fact, and their names and functions served as a mute protest against the encroachments of the police. The attitude of ineffective defense is also signalized in the obstinate refusal to abandon the division into sixteen quarters and adopt a division into twenty provided in the police organization. The peculiar province of the Hôtel de Ville was the river trade and everything that concerned it. It shared

¹ See *Almanach Royal de 1789*, 423-427. Cf. Monin, *op. cit.*, 399-402.

² Such ordinances were registered by the Châtelet, and generally by Parlement also, in order that cases arising under them might be prosecuted in the courts and carried up on appeal. Not infrequently Parlement succeeded by protest in modifying such legislation, whether it was due to the lieutenant-general himself or whether he was simply the instrument by which it was transmitted.

with the lieutenant-general the duty of making arrangements for furnishing the city with an adequate supply of food. For this purpose its authority extended over the Seine and the rivers which flowed into the Seine. As both Paris and the generality of Paris were under the minister of the *maison du roi*, the relation of the city to the surrounding country was not simply that of being the best market. This relation is implied in the law which forbade speculators to buy wheat within ten leagues, a feature of the old régime which showed a strong tendency to persist even after the July revolution.

In filling the positions of provost and aldermen there was an elaborate semblance of election. The provost was actually nominated by the king, but each year two aldermen were chosen by a body composed partly of officials, partly of notable bourgeois subjected to a double sifting process. Almost the only valuable opportunity of gaining experience in conducting business in public assemblies was offered by the *fabriques* or parish organizations. Here for the election of a responsible churchwarden, and to pass upon the accounts of the retiring churchwarden, two general assemblies were held each year. In order to vote in these assemblies it was necessary to be rated on the tax list for at least six livres. The fact that the parishes were the only schools training men for united action might, but for their inequality of population, have made of them the natural subdivisions of the municipality when the revolution of July took place.

II.

The beginnings of a new order of things were made half unconsciously during the elections to the States-General. The machinery designed to provide for the choice of the deputies of the Third Estate was to survive its original purpose and not only to bear for a time the burden of administration, but in a measure to control the lines on which the new provisional government was constructed.

Before the method of election was arranged in detail, an attempt was made to bring together the electors of the three orders in a single assembly. The most urgent champions of this plan were the officials of the Hôtel de Ville, according to whom "ecclesiastics, nobles, plebeians, were all collectively included in the title Bourgeois de Paris". Their special purpose was to secure for the provost of the merchants and the *bureau de la ville* the honor of conducting the elections, an honor to which the Châtelet and the provost of Paris also laid claim. The decision of the government in favor of the Châtelet caused the resignation of the provost of the merchants,

Le Peletier de Morfontaine. The vacancy was filled by the appointment of Jacques de Flesselles, destined to be one of the victims of the July revolution. This decision did not, however, lead to an immediate abandonment of the plan of coöperation. The nobles themselves began to urge it. Just before the primary assemblies were held they met and voted to send to the district assemblies of the Third Estate a protest "in favor of the preservation of the commune and of the right to form a single body, a right which the citizens of all orders of the Ville de Paris have always enjoyed". Probably the nobles would have been unwilling to be treated as simple citizens. They, as well as the clergy, would have wished the same number of electors as the Third Estate. The Third Estate naturally feared "the Greeks bearing gifts". They dreaded the prestige of the nobles and believed that in a single assembly the nobles might obtain control and secure a disproportionate number of deputations. This was not the only fear. There was a rumor that for the administration of the city there was to be created a commission in which the three estates should be equally represented. This provoked a motion in one district assembly that the clergy and the nobles should begin individually by entering the primary assemblies as simple citizens. Had a loyal coöperation between the three orders of Paris been possible, it would have had an important influence not only upon the method of voting in the States-General but also upon the municipal movement in July.¹

The details of the elections were regulated by decree April 13². One of its most important provisions was a distribution of Paris into sixty arrondissements or districts, named generally from the churches in which the primary electoral assemblies were to meet. Although these districts grouped men who were strangers to one another and who had never been accustomed to act together, they were not long in acquiring a distinctive political character; and what were devised in the spring as pieces of election machinery became in the fall semi-independent governments, formidable to the central authority not only of Paris but also of France.

¹ Chassin, *Les Élections et les Cahiers de Paris en 1789*, 4 vols. (*Collection de documents relatifs à l'histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution française*); see I, 122, 333-336, 359-362, II, 167, 218 ff. Also *Motion faite par un citoyen dans l'assemblée du district de St.-Germain des Prés* (pièce, Bibl. Nat.). Count Lally-Tollendal, one of the most brilliant of the Constituents and a Paris nobleman, wrote in January, 1790: "Plus on avait semé de désunion et de rivalité, plus un exemple d'union et de concorde devenait nécessaire. Celui qu'eût donné la capitale eût été important. Un vœu commun, et juste autant qu'unanime, formé par huit cent mille citoyens, eût étouffé les semences de haine que des missionnaires de discordes avaient répandue dans une partie de la France." *Mémoire ou second lettre* (pièce, Bibl. Nat.), 14-15.

² Reprinted in Chassin, I, 399-405.

It was the intention of the government to restrict as far as possible the action of these district or primary assemblies. Their officers were to be chosen by the *bureau de la ville*, and they were not to forward to the general assembly of electors any cahiers or statements of principles. The qualifications for voters excluded the bulk of the poorer workingmen. Those who paid a poll-tax of six livres were admitted to the primary assemblies, just as they had previously been admitted to parish assemblies. Capacity was recognized as establishing an alternative claim, proved by the possession of a university degree, of letters of mastership in the arts, or of certain official titles. Against the distinguishing features of these decrees there were many protests. The attempt to bridle the assemblies was more generally criticized than anything else¹. The size of the tax qualification, or the existence of any such qualification, was also here and there condemned.

The primary assemblies of the Third Estate are interesting because they were the first essay in political action by the Paris bourgeoisie. Elaborate military precautions had been taken against disturbances. Probably it was because of this display of authority, and of its natural consequence—rumors of a popular insurrection, that so many of the bourgeois did not appear². Instead of from thirty to forty thousand being present, only 11,706 votes were cast. One man described his haste to enter the church before the crowd became too great, but to his astonishment no more people were there than there would have been had it been announced that the Abbé Cotin³ was to preach. Those who did come felt instinctively that a new day had dawned, that they had ceased to be merely subjects and had become citizens. Bailly, the Academician, who was to be the first mayor of Paris and who was to pay for his faults, if not for his virtues, with his head, wrote, "When I found myself in the district assembly I felt that I was breathing a new atmosphere: it was a phenomenon to be something in the political order."⁴ On the whole the meetings were tranquil. Even Montjoie, later a bitter adversary of the men who became the leaders in Paris, acknowledged this. He noted that except in the outskirts of the faubourgs there were present only

¹ See particularly *Arrêtés concernant le choix des Électeurs de Paris* (Bibl. Nat., pièce), adopted, so says the pamphlet, in an assembly of citizens April 19. Chassin believes it was prepared at the house of Adrien Duport, a friend of Lafayette.

² This is the opinion of more than one observer. Quénard, secretary of the district of Petits Augustins, asserts it in his *Tableau historique*, the introduction to *Portraits des Personnages célèbres de la Révolution*, 38–39. Cf. *Mes Loisirs*, the manuscript journal of Hardy (Bibl. Nat., Mss. fr. nouv. acq. 2667.)

³ Immortalized by Molière in the *Femmes Savantes* under the name Trissotin.

⁴ Bailly, *Mémoires*, II, 307.

the élite of the bourgeoisie, members of the academies, lawyers, rich merchants, artisans, and artists. This was not a source of unmixed satisfaction to him any more than to men of more democratic sympathies, for he saw out in the streets, the markets, and the workshops the laborers who patiently took up day after day their painful tasks, but who could not approach these assemblies. "Who can tell us", he thought, "if the despotism of the bourgeoisie will not succeed the pretended aristocracy of the nobles?"¹

Although the assemblies gave no ground for fearing public outbreaks, their sessions revealed an ominous spirit of independence. Many of them decided to regard the decrees of April 13 as simple advice. They insisted upon organizing their assemblies and choosing their own officers. Sometimes they were content to elect the officials who had been sent to preside over them, in case these men were willing to regard such an election as the sole title to the position. At other times they selected men from their own number and disregarded the protests of the dispossessed officials.² Once in control, the larger number of these assemblies did not adjourn until they had drawn up a cahier, some of them instructing their electors to be governed strictly by its terms³. In a few instances also a determined effort was made to render these assemblies permanent during the continuance of the States-General. Although this effort had no consequences of immediate importance, it is particularly interesting because it revealed tendencies in these districts which in July and afterward rendered them at once useful and formidable.⁴ Like many other questions in the history of Revolutionary Paris, it is rendered obscure by the destruction of the municipal records in May, 1871.

¹ Montjoie, *Histoire de la Révolution de France et de l'Assemblée Nationale*, I, 87.

² Chassin believes that only about ten conformed to the regulations, II, 337.

³ The cahiers that have been preserved present various schemes for the reorganization of Paris as well as for improvements along the practical lines of public works, health, and industry. There is a general desire for a freely-elected body of municipal officers. For the text of these cahiers see Chassin, *op. cit.*

⁴ Although Montjoie speaks of the pretensions of the voters to remain assembled, his words throw no light on the scope of the movement, *op. cit.*, I, 88. Quénard's remark, apropos of July 13, that the districts had been closed since the end of the elections, is decisive, especially since it is supported by the records of the organization of the districts in July. *Portraits*, 43. Further evidence is offered by the fact that Charton, one of the electors, proposed in their assembly, July 10, that the districts be invited to assemble in the places where they had been convoked in April, that they be authorized to name their own officers, and to remain in session until the withdrawal of the troops that surrounded Paris: *Procès-verbal des séances et délibérations de l'assemblée générale des électeurs de Paris, réunis à l'hôtel de ville, le 14 juillet 1789, rédigé depuis le 26 avril jusqu'au 21 mai 1789, par M. Bailly, . . . et depuis le 22 mai jusqu'au 30 juillet 1789, par M. Duveyrier*, 3 vols., I, 158-159.

The tendency toward permanence in one or two districts was purely practical in its character. Saint-Étienne du Mont decided to keep its organization together until it learned whether its refusal to obey the decrees governing the election would be held to invalidate the credentials of its electors. Just before the assembly of Saint-Roch completed its work, one of its members, "seeing with grief" the moment of separation, urged that they meet once a week in order to correspond with the Paris deputies at the States-General. His aim was the revival of public spirit¹. In the only other cases about which definite information exists the aim was more distinctly political. The district Notre-Dame held at least two meetings between the end of the primary assemblies and the uprising in July. At the second the question was raised of establishing a commission of sixty, with one delegate from each district, to formulate the opinions of the districts as new problems came up for discussion in the National Assembly. The question was also asked if the electors, who, as will be explained, had resumed their sessions, could take any decision without consulting the districts.² This is one of the earliest expressions of a determination that the primary assemblies must be consulted on every important matter even by the National Assembly. Those who most stoutly defended the doctrine knew more about the *comitia tributa* of the Romans than about the representative theory, which, indeed, they regarded as a medieval invention inconsistent with the sovereignty of the people.

In another district a species of permanence was decided upon as a result of the energetic efforts of a man to whom Paris was to owe its first provisional organization, Jean Pierre Brissot. Like many others, after the announcement of the States-General he published views on their organization and on the elections.³ His desire to be chosen one of the deputies of Paris was scarcely veiled in these writings. And as far as qualifications were concerned he was fitted to take an intelligent part in the work of the States-General. He had resided in England, had traveled in America, and probably had a more accurate knowledge of American constitutional methods than any other Frenchman save Lafayette. Unhappily by what

¹ *Discours* (Bibl. Nat., pièce), by Millin de Grandmaison.

² *Seconde suite de l'Assemblée du dist. ou département de Notre-Dame* (Bibl. Nat., pièce). Cf. *Projet de Règlement* (Bibl. Nat., pièce), a radical expression of the referendum idea, submitted to the district Capucins de la Chaussée-d'Antin.

³ His *Plan de conduite* appeared in April. He had also published *Trois mots aux Parisiens*, a pamphlet not credited to him by Tourneux in his *Bibliographie de l'histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution*, nor in the *Catalogue de l'histoire de France*. For proof of his authorship, see his *Scrutin de l'Élection de Paris*, 7, and *Patriote français*, no. 170.

Brissot felicitously called a "singular circumstance", but which was nothing more singular than a lack of votes, he was not even chosen one of the electors. He at once determined to have his doctrines appear, if not his person.¹ After a bitter contest he persuaded his district, the Filles Saint-Thomas, to give imperative instructions to its electors. These instructions were substantially his work, if not drawn by him. What was still more important, he pushed through the creation of a committee of correspondence, which should correspond with the Paris deputies and which should remain in existence until a "Declaration of Rights" should be sanctioned.

The electoral assembly was a repetition on a larger scene of what had been done in the districts. As the officers of the Châtelet who had been appointed to preside would not accept an election from the electors as alone giving them this right, they were courteously forced to withdraw, and the assembly chose its own officers. The electors also decided to continue their sessions during the States-General, although the government had assigned to them simply the task of selecting twenty deputies and drawing up a cahier. When the elections were completed, May 23, they adjourned until June 7 to meet at a place indicated by a committee². It did not prove to be easy to carry this decision into effect. The minister, M. de Villedeuil, to whose department Paris belonged, when consulted by Bailly, replied that the mission of the electors was ended³. Nevertheless the committee went to the Hôtel de Ville to ask the use of one of its halls. There it received a similar answer. By June 25 a private hall had been found in which the electors reassembled⁴. The momentous changes which resulted during these very days in the triumph of the Third Estate at Versailles compelled a different answer to the next request for a hall at the Hôtel de

¹ See *Discours* (Bibl. Nat., pièce) prononcé par M. Brissot de Warville, à l'Élection du District de la rue des Filles Saint-Thomas, le 21 Avril 1789, nouvelle édition, etc., and *Observations sur la nécessité d'établir. . . des comités de correspondance*. This brochure is reëdited by Chassin to appear as a motion made by Brissot, I, 400-402. It is apparent from his subsequent pamphlets, a *Précis* addressed to the electoral assembly and a *Scrutin de l'Élection de Paris ou lettre de M.B.D.W. à un électeur*, that he still hoped to be chosen a deputy; warning the assembly of its duty to choose the best men whether they were electors or not. The electors did go outside of their number for four deputies, but Brissot was not among the four.

² One of the committee was Thuriot de la Rozière, who was to play a prominent part July 14, and who, during the Convention, was to be a leading Montagnard. Another was Bancel des Issarts, a friend of Brissot and the Rolands.

³ Bailly, *Mémoires*, I, 235-236.

⁴ "Chez un traiteur de la rue Dauphine, dans une salle dite du Musée, qu'une société de gens de lettres voulut bien leur céder." *Procès-verbal*, I, 88. The elector Dusaulx says that two or three hundred met at this place. *Insurrection Parisienne (L'œuvre des sept jours)*, 16.

Ville. The provost of the merchants did not allow the deputation even to conclude its formal speech, but interrupted with the declaration that the Hôtel de Ville was "notre maison commune". An assembly in which the influential men of Paris had confidence was thus installed in the natural home of the commune two weeks before circumstances threw upon it the heaviest responsibilities.¹

III.

The electoral assembly was as able a body of men as it would have been possible to choose from the bourgeoisie of Paris. It was often criticized because nearly half of the number were lawyers too much inclined to speechmaking. This reproach came from literary men who were inundating Paris with pamphlets. If it did remain chiefly a body of bourgeois, this was not altogether its fault, for invitations to the new sessions were sent to the electors of the other two orders. By July 14 only seventeen nobles and twenty-five ecclesiastics had responded.

The first meetings of the electors were coincident with the crisis at Versailles. When a royal army began to gather about the city and disorder increased within it, various projects were brought before them for the reorganization of the municipal administration, for their own transformation into a communal assembly, and especially for the establishment of a citizen guard.² Alarmed by the growing multitude of vagabonds, whom they called *gens sans aveu* or more briefly *brigands*, they looked upon such a guard chiefly as a protection against riot, incidentally depriving the ministry of its excuse for bringing an army into the neighborhood of Paris. It would also render the success of an attack on the city too doubtful to warrant the attempt.³ Necker considered the establishment of a guard as the best means consistent with liberty of preventing a recurrence of scenes like the rescue of the mutinous *gardes-françaises* from the Abbaye prison.⁴

¹ Flesselles gave his reasons in a letter to the Garde des Sceaux: "J'ai pensé, Monseigneur, que l'état des choses n'était plus le même qu'à l'époque où j'en avais fait le refus, parce que le Roi venait d'autoriser MM. les députés à demander à leurs commettans des explications ou interprétations de leurs pouvoirs; que, de plus dans le moment d'une agitation aussi forte que celle qui règne, il était de la prudence et de la sagesse du Bureau de la Ville d'accueillir la demande qui lui était faite." Chassin, III, 445-446.

² The first motion was made June 25 by Nicholas de Bonneville, and inserted in the *Procès-verbal* of July 10, when several other motions in a similar sense impelled him to insist on priority. *Procès-verbal*, I, 130 ff. Cf. projects of Carra, Bancal des Issarts, and Charton, *ibid.*, 139 ff.

³ This appears from the several propositions as well as from the form the matter finally took July 11. *Ibid.*, I, 173-174.

⁴ Bailly says Necker made this remark to him July 1, *Mémoires*, I, 267.

The news of the dismissal of Necker did not reach Paris until long after noon, Sunday, July 12. Rumors of the incidents in the Palais Royal, on the boulevards, and in the Place Louis XV impelled the people to gather at the Hôtel de Ville. Some of the electors also came about six o'clock. They could never forget the scenes that met their eyes at that time and for the next ten days.¹ The problem would have been difficult had the crowd been composed wholly of honest men who sought arms only to defend themselves against an attack which they heard had already begun. But in this crowd came hundreds who realized that for the first time they could indulge in all sorts of violence without being locked up in the prisons and broken on the wheel the next day. Indeed they could count upon being regarded as energetic patriots to whom the authorities could address kindly counsel and not sharp words of warning. These men revealed their presence by threatening to burn the Hôtel de Ville if their demands were not granted.

The crowd did not respect the enclosure within which the electors were gathering. They pressed the electors back upon the officers' bureau. A thousand confused voices demanded arms, the order to sound the tocsin, authority for the citizens to arm in order to repulse the troops. The electors had no legal powers, and they could not give to others what they did not themselves possess, but this was no time for a discussion of delicate questions of legality. They directed the concierge to deliver the arms that were at the Hôtel de Ville. The impatient mob soon broke into the room where the arms of the *gardes de la ville* were stored. This act of doubtful wisdom, considering that the guards were an effective though small force, was more than equaled a moment after when a vagabond clad in a shirt, with bare legs and no shoes, shouldered a gun and took the place of a disarmed guard at the door of the great hall. Finally about eleven o'clock there was a sufficient number of electors present to take more general measures. It was voted that the districts should be convoked at once and that electors should go through the city and disperse the mobs. Already sinister reports had come that the vagabonds were spreading themselves armed and threatening through all quarters.

The thirteenth was for Paris the most critical day of the upheaval. The real danger came not so much from the troops about the city as from the disorderly elements within it. The government was too irresolute to order an attack when the attitude of the Paris-

¹ The description of incidents at the Hôtel de Ville is taken from the *Procès-verbal* except where otherwise noted.

ians was so bold. But the sacking of the convent Saint Lazare, the opening of the doors of the prison La Force, the attempt of the prisoners at the Châtelet to break out, the burning of the barriers, proved that if vigorous action was not taken the city was in grave danger, and that, at the least, the honesty of its political aims would be compromised. The action of the electors was given a certain color of legality because of the coöperation of the *bureau de la ville*, although this bureau had no authority to take the measures it became partly responsible for. Neither electors nor bureau assumed an attitude openly hostile to the king. The circumstances offered an excuse for what they did on the thirteenth, although had an attack been made by the royal army it is evident that they would have managed or organized the defense. This is proved by what occurred on the fourteenth.

On this first day there was no note of discord between the electors who had assumed extraordinary powers and the district assemblies. These bodies were busied with their organization and with provisional measures of defense. Early in the morning the ringing of the bells called the citizens to the churches where they had met to choose their electors in April¹. The electors also began to gather at the Hôtel de Ville. To quiet the clamorous multitude they announced that the establishment of the citizen guard had already been voted, and asked the citizens to return to their districts. Cries for arms were the only response to this request. When they explained that they knew nothing of the city administration and that it was necessary to appeal to the provost of the merchants, the crowd demanded that he be found.² Not long afterward he came, and soon

¹ Hardy wrote in his journal: "Vers dix heures du matin rue St. Jacques. . . se fait entendre un tambour qui annonçait de la part des officiers qu'en eût à se réunir à l'instant par districts dans les différentes églises, comme on l'avait déjà fait au mois d'avril précédent. . . et bientôt après ces Eglises font entendre une seule cloche en forme de tocsin pour appeler les citoyens de tous les ordres aux différentes assemblées." But this honest bourgeois could not attend his assembly because "mon épouse ne veut jamais me laisser aller". *MS. cit.*, VIII, 385.

² Dusaulx says the people believed that there was a secret arsenal at the Hôtel de Ville, a notion nearly fatal to the electors. *Op. cit.*, 28. In the afternoon a large supply of powder was seized just as it was being despatched to Rouen. It was saved with difficulty from the mob on the Place de la Grève. Before this new stock arrived, in order to protect from plunder what was already at the Hôtel de Ville a brave ecclesiastic, the Abbé Lefevre [Lefebvre], undertook to supervise its distribution, and remained at his perilous post for thirty-six hours, constantly menaced by pistols, pikes, and knives. One of the mob sat tranquilly on a barrel of powder smoking a pipe. Happily he had a thrifty soul and was willing to sell the pipe to the abbé for three francs. *Rapport des Journées du 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 juillet*, Abbé Lefevre, Arch. Nat., C 134, dossier 6. Cf. *Procès-verbal*, I, 231-235. During the night of July 13-14 the electors at the Hôtel de Ville disarmed more than 150 vagabonds, drunk with wine and brandy and asleep in the halls. *Ibid.*, 270.

the law-officer and the four aldermen were there also. The right to preside was conceded to the provost. One of the electors assumed that the crowd was Paris and stated the question to it. The new sovereign at once confirmed the decision. The members of the *bureau de la ville* were asked to join the electors in taking the necessary measures. They voted to form a permanent committee¹, chosen by the assembly and divided into subcommittees, to take charge of provisioning the city, of organizing the guard, and the like. The lieutenant-general of the police was sent for to furnish necessary information. Each of the districts was asked to draw up a list of 200 persons, subsequently to be increased, to constitute the guard and to provide for public security according to instructions to be furnished by the permanent committee. The districts were also to receive the arms of persons who were attached to no district. Finally they were asked to confirm these decrees. From this time forward until the first crisis was past the permanent committee was the center of activity. The electors adjourned until afternoon, while the committee elaborated its plan of a *milice parisienne*.²

The committee was to receive little assistance from the lieutenant-general of police. He promised what information his subordinates could offer about the method of provisioning the city, but he felt the personal danger which threatened him and which resulted that night in the sack of his *hôtel*. It was of little service that the electors made him jointly responsible with the *bureau de la ville* for this important task. The attempt is interesting, for it shows how disinclined they were to disorganize the existing administration. They kept as close to the borders of legality as possible. The conduct of Flesselles was within the next few hours to bring suspicion upon the *bureau de la ville* and to make a preservation of the old machinery impossible. Flesselles was a royal officer. As such he was naturally anxious not to compromise himself. The most reasonable theory of his conduct was that he was endeavoring to gain time, and that while he accepted a position as presiding officer of the electors and of the permanent committee, he was reluctant to coöperate effectively

¹ The title "permanent", afterward so misunderstood, meant a committee which was to meet day and night. Cf. Dusaulx, 27. When its members were chosen, the crowd complained that only electors were named. One of the electors cried out, "Whom do you wish that we name?" "Me", replied a modest patriot, and he was chosen by acclamation.

² Late in the day the command of the new guard was offered to the Duc d'Aumont, with the Marquis de la Salle as second in command. La Salle became commander the following day because of the irresolution of d'Aumont. The colors of the guard were to be blue and red. The district Notre-Dame tied the two with a white ribbon, anticipating the tricolor. MS. Arch. Nat., C 134.

in arming the bourgeoisie. He was accused of sending deputations of districts which asked for arms to places where no stock of arms had ever been kept, and of causing boxes of clothing marked "*artillerie*" to be sent to the Hôtel de Ville. But he could hardly have been foolhardy enough to have attempted so transparent an artifice as the last, and in the other cases he may have been himself deceived as well as other members of the permanent committee.¹

Meanwhile the districts had been busy organizing, drawing up lists for the guard, establishing patrols, and disarming the vagabonds who during the earlier part of the day almost had possession of the streets. The success with which they carried out this plan became apparent before night. The result is best described by an English traveler²:

Early in the afternoon (July 13) we began to perceive among the motley groups of mob who paraded the streets with such symptoms of irritation as must soon have produced excess, here and there a man of decent exterior, carrying a musket, and assuming a respectable military appearance. The number of these gradually increased, and it was evidently their intention at once to conciliate and disarm the irregular band; and this appeared to be principally effected before the evening, at which time the regularly armed citizens almost exclusively occupied the streets.

This traveler, Dr. Rigby, marveled at the extraordinary address which the citizens showed in accomplishing their delicate task. They were helped by the *gardes-françaises*, most of whom had cast in their lot from the first with the party of resistance to the royal troops and who felt that they would be ruined if the affair degenerated into a riotous orgy.³

During the momentous hours of the fourteenth the burden fell almost exclusively upon the permanent committee, for because of the multitude that had invaded the Hôtel de Ville it was impossible for the electors to organize their assembly until the day was over. The action of the committee showed the same conservative desire

¹ Cf. Dusaulx, 34. Also *Récit des Tentatives du Dist. des Mathurins, pour se procurer des armes et munitions dans la journée du Lundi, 13 juillet 1789* (Bibl. Nat., pièce).

² Dr. Rigby's *Letters from France*, 55, 57. Jefferson was also surprised at the good order so promptly reestablished. Montjoie noted the change in the streets, *op. cit.*, part III, 86. Cf. the summary of what was accomplished given by the secretary of the electors. *Procès-verbal*, I, 263.

³ Jules Flammermont, *La Journée du 14 juillet 1789*, clxxx, note 2, quotes this view of the conduct of the *gardes-françaises* from the despatches of the Saxon minister, Salmour. Not all the *gardes-françaises* had as yet abandoned their officers. One post on the Chaussée-d'Antin declined on the night of the thirteenth to send a guard to the Hôtel de Ville. *Procès-verbal*, I, 255.

to remain within the bounds of legality, and, when this was impossible, to take measures which were likely to restore order or preserve the city from actual attack. Early in the morning, impelled by constant rumors that the royal troops were advancing into the faubourgs, it caused barricades to be constructed, ditches dug, and all other measures to be taken which could effectively oppose the entrance of the royal troops. A little before this Éthis de Corny, the law-officer of the Hôtel de Ville, was sent to the Invalides to ask for arms, but he arrived only to be a helpless spectator while a multitude composed of delegations of districts, bodies of the new citizen guard, and *gens sans aveu* burst through the gates or escalated the low ramparts and ransacked the vast building, carrying off 32,000 guns.

The committee was even less successful at the Bastille. At eight o'clock, when it was reported that the guns of this fortress were trained on the Rue Saint-Antoine, a deputation was sent to assure De Launey that the people would make no attack on him and to urge him to withdraw his guns. The request was complied with, and this intervention might have been successful had the deputation at once returned to the Hôtel de Ville. Unhappily the members accepted De Launey's invitation to breakfast. The long delay led the crowd about the fortress to suspect that they were being held as prisoners. But the more disastrous consequence was that the committee was left in ignorance of the situation and was unable therefore to take any measures to restrain the crowd, which grew momentarily more excited and which threatened the garrison. Indeed this first deputation did not reach the Hôtel de Ville until just before the fighting began. In order to put an end to the actual conflict the committee sent another deputation to ask De Launey to receive into the Bastille a detachment of the *milice parisienne*, which should guard the fortress in company with the garrison, but which should remain under the command of the committee. Matters became critical before the return of this delegation, which did not succeed in communicating with De Launey. It was determined to send another, this time with drum and flag of truce. The crowd was so convinced that the fighting was due to the treachery of De Launey that the committee or at least the military bureau felt forced to abandon its attitude of mediation and to coöperate in the attack in case the last deputations failed.¹ About the same time Hulin, unknown to the committee, led to the Bastille a body of *gardes-françaises* who had placed themselves at the service of the committee earlier in the

¹ *Ibid.*, 335.

day. They took with them several cannon and trained cannon-eers. It was these cannon and the guards which effected the capture of the Bastille. After they had gone the two deputations returned, the last reporting that even its flag had been fired upon with every appearance of treachery.

The fighting at the Bastille had sinister echoes at the Hôtel de Ville. It is impossible in a few words to suggest the horror of confusion against which the committee and the few electors who were able to gather were forced to struggle. Mingled among reputable citizens, demanding arms or making complaints, were curiosity seekers and vagabonds. These men constantly menaced the lives of the committee and threatened to burn the Hôtel de Ville. On the seats surrounding the great hall, where the electors were to meet, was a crowd armed with guns, pikes, sabers, and even with sticks to which knives were fastened. Another part of the room was filled by men whose sinister features reminded the electors of the vagabonds who had been disarmed the day before. They were now armed for the most part with ancient battle-axes and halberds which came from the plunder of the *garde meuble*. All these men kept calling for the electors, a small number of whom were present, but who were powerless to compel silence or even to find a place to sit down.¹

While the result of the struggle at the Bastille was still in doubt, a deputation from the Palais Royal appeared denouncing Flesselles as a traitor.² At first Flesselles was scarcely able to face his accusers with calmness. To give himself countenance he attempted to eat a crust of bread, but he could scarcely swallow. One of the oldest members of the committee, Dusaulx, energetically defended him, urging that it was dangerous to dispute while men were being killed at the Bastille. Reasoning of this sort satisfied everybody except the men from the Palais Royal. It was then that the second deputation to the Bastille was despatched, partly as a countermove to the denunciators. But these men insisted that Flesselles at least go into the great hall. He felt himself lost, but went out saying, "Come, gentlemen, come to the great hall, and let the committee work a little". Probably he would have been murdered on the spot had the mob not been afraid of killing one of the electors.

Shortly after this the news of the fall of the Bastille came, and with it rushed in another crowd with some of the prisoners. The

¹ Abridged from Pitra's account, in the Flammermont edition, *op. cit.*, 10.

² This was the first exploit of the Palais Royal since authority had changed hands, and it indicated that, whatever the régime, that group of agitators was likely to remain restless and arrogant.

joy of the conquest did not displace the desire for the blood of the conquered, and in spite of the heroic efforts of Élie, one of the leaders in the fight against the Bastille, two of the prisoners were snatched away by the mob, and were hanged in front of the Hôtel de Ville. Another victim was wanted. New accusations were raised against Flesselles. His colleagues now maintained an ominous silence. It was proposed that he be held as a hostage or imprisoned in the Châtelet, but the general opinion demanded that he go to the Palais Royal to be judged. Flesselles abandoned himself to his fate, bewildered no doubt by the new theory of liberty that erected into a supreme tribunal any crowd bold enough to arrogate to itself such functions. He said simply, "Well, then, gentlemen, come to the Palais Royal". He descended the stairs and crossed the square unmolested, but at the corner of the Quai Pelletier he was shot by an unknown young man.¹ His head and his body immediately shared the fate of those of De Launey and the other victims of the mob's fury.

IV.

The capture of the Bastille marked the decisive defeat of the party which had persuaded the king to surround Versailles and Paris with an army and appoint a reactionary ministry. Paris had little to fear save from itself. The irremediable ruin of the old administration had been signalized by the murder of the provost of the merchants and the resignation of the lieutenant-general of the police. The task of restoring order and of securing a supply of food had fallen to the electors and to their committee. The new civic guard could protect life and property, but since its orders came from sixty different districts it could contribute little to the reestablishment of normal conditions. Indeed by constantly arresting carriages and individuals it increased the confusion. The barriers were also closed, so that little food could be brought into the markets and the octroi could not be collected. The permanent committee attempted to master the situation by dividing its own work among four bureaus and by organizing constant coöperation between itself or the electors and the districts. To bring about harmonious action was exceedingly difficult. Projects were voted but not carried into effect. One of these projects asked the districts to send a deputy each morning and evening to the Hôtel de Ville to deliberate with the electors. Had it been adopted by the districts, it might have forestalled the

¹ Flammermont, in order to relieve the fourteenth of July of the odium of this murder, suggests that it was due to private vengeance.

action of the more restless of them to replace the electors by a new assembly of delegates.¹

The district assemblies with singularly few exceptions concerned themselves with the practical problems of order. Occasionally they sent deputies or commissioners to the Hôtel de Ville to act with the electors or to report their action. One district which later opposed the establishment of any strictly representative central assembly went so far on this first day of revolution as to authorize the electors to declare themselves the representatives of the commune, with power to do anything necessary to maintain the public security.² Brissot persuaded his district to request the others to unite in creating a committee of safety, composed of six members from each. This act, however, had no immediate consequences.³

In several instances the more natural grouping by parishes was hastily adopted. This movement was strong in the parish of Saint-Séverin. The members abandoned their districts and excluded other men who had in April met at Saint-Séverin as the district headquarters. They even threatened with violence their neighbors of the parish of Saint-Germain-le-Vieil, if they did not immediately withdraw. This forced the three neighboring parishes to adopt the same system. A little later Saint-Séverin discovered that the district system was too firmly established in other parts of the city to be shaken.⁴

The most important event of the fifteenth was the choice of Lafayette as commander of the new guard and of Bailly as mayor. A deputation was sent by the National Assembly to convey the news that the king had given way completely and that the troops were to be withdrawn from Paris and Versailles. Lafayette was at the head of this delegation and Bailly was one of its prominent members. After it had been formally received and, on the proposition of the archbishop of Paris, was about to go to Notre Dame to render thanks to God by a *Te Deum* for the restoration of peace, suddenly cries were heard proclaiming Lafayette *commandant-général de la milice parisienne*, ignoring the fact that the Marquis de la Salle had already been appointed to this position. Earlier in the day among

¹ *Procès-verbal*, I, 425-427. An interesting account of the difficulty of getting out of Paris even on the fifteenth is given in Dr. Rigby's *Letters from France*, 72-83.

² This was the Prémontrés. MS. Arch. Nat. C 134, dossier 1.

³ *Arrêts*, Filles Saint-Thomas, du 13 juillet 1789 (Bibl. Nat., pièce).

⁴ *District et Paroisse de St.-Séverin* (Bibl. Nat., pièce). For Saint-Germain-le-Vieil, see *Mémoire*, MS. Arch. Nat. C 134, dossier 6. Cf. Bibl. Nat. Mss. fr. nouv. acq. 2696, fol. 49, and Hardy, VIII, 392, 398. Hardy says the parish system was in general favor as late as July 16. Certain districts also met first as parishes. Loustallot argued a month later in *Révolutions de Paris*, no. VIII, p. 7, that the parish system was more effective.

several electors gathered about the bureau discussing the question of the command, Moreau de Saint-Méry had silently pointed to the bust of Lafayette on the mantel, and all had agreed that the defense of French liberty should be intrusted to the "Illustrious Defender of the Liberty of the New World"¹. Bailly was in the same manner proclaimed provost of the merchants, but the title was immediately changed to mayor of Paris. He stammered out a few expressions of gratitude and protested his incapacity to bear so heavy a burden. He accepted the office under the impression that he was to fill merely the place of nominal honor left vacant by the death of Flesselles, but he soon learned that the departure of Necker and the resignation of De Crosne had abandoned to the new officials both subsistence and the police. It was characteristic of Bailly that although the appointment to the office of provost of the merchants belonged to the king and although he still recognized the king's right, he adopted a waiting attitude because he was told that Paris would be displeased if he requested royal confirmation².

Both Bailly and Lafayette entered upon their duties at once. It had become evident that for the moment the most important task was to provide the city with food. If nothing was done, within two days there would be no bread. Bailly immediately passed into the committee of subsistence, which, created by the permanent committee on the fifteenth, was enlarged by the electors the following day. M. de Montaran, *intendant du commerce*, and M. Doumer, who had been purchasing wheat and flour, were also to assist in this work. M. de Crosne, who had not dared to retain his position as lieutenant-general of the police, also came until his life was in danger and he was obliged to emigrate. The task was enormous, because under the paternal theory of administration the grain trade had only for short periods of time been left to take care of itself, and consequently when, terrified by the excesses of the thirteenth and fourteenth, all the minor agents of the administration fled, a new system had to be improvised hastily to save the city from famine. It was impossible to entrust the task to experienced hands like those of M. Doumer. He had been Necker's agent, but he was associated with the old order, and distrust was so great that to give him authority in this matter would probably have led only to his own

¹ *Procès-verbal*, I, 422. The bust was the gift of the state of Virginia. Already on the thirteenth Brissot had proposed Lafayette as colonel-general of the guard. MS. Arch. Nat. W.

² Bailly, *Mémoires*, II, 39-40. Since the permanent committee had appointed La Salle commander, a delicate question would have arisen had not La Salle gracefully withdrawn, offering to serve under Lafayette. When he wrote his memoirs, Lafayette seems to have been under the impression that La Salle had resigned. II, 259.

destruction as a "detestable monopolist". The legend of the *pacte de famine* was firmly established in the popular mind. Important as this work was, Bailly's constant attendance at the committee gave the electors an opportunity to ignore their new chief, and to set an example which, followed by the subsequent assemblies, brought war into the new provisional government.¹

With a curious inconsequence the electors on the sixteenth voted the immediate demolition of the Bastille, a fortress belonging to the king, which they treated as lawful prize of war, and on the same day sent a deputation to present to him the "respect, love, and fidelity of all the inhabitants of his good town of Paris", and particularly to thank him for ordering the withdrawal of the troops and throwing himself unreservedly upon the support of the National Assembly. This was a startling indication of the extent of the revolution of the fourteenth. The royal authority was destroyed. It rested with the provisional government of Paris to say what should be done with the property of the crown within its reach.

The victory of Paris was confirmed by the coming of the king the following day. This fact furnished point to a not altogether happy bon mot of the new mayor, who handed the king the keys at one of the barriers. "These", he said, "are the same keys that were presented to Henry IV; he had reconquered his people: here it is the people which has reconquered its king." The preparation for the ceremony gave the old *bureau de la ville* an opportunity to display its ancient privileges for the last time.² The members were permitted without protest from the electors to distinguish themselves from this body by wearing the formal municipal costume. They even went so far as to raise the question whether they should present themselves on their knees. To the profuse expressions of affection and respect which the assembly gave him the king replied, "The best manner of proving your attachment to me is to reëstablish tranquility and to put the malefactors who shall be arrested into the hands of ordinary justice."³ He also expressed his pleasure that Bailly was mayor and Lafayette commander. Just as he was entering his carriage he said more formally to Lafayette that he confirmed his nomination. Lafayette, however, sought a confirmation more suited to the new order of affairs.

¹ Bailly, *Mémoires*, 70-73.

² The feeling against the *bureau de la ville* was increasing in the districts. Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois protested against receiving its propositions unless countersigned by the electors. MS. Arch. Nat. C 134. Cf. *Procès-verbal*, II, 68.

³ *Ibid.*, 102.

V.

Already on the sixteenth the interesting question of the authority of the electors to administer the affairs of the city was discussed. Two days before, the district of the Cordeliers, which later under the leadership of Danton was to wage war on the central assembly, had protested against the use of the title "permanent" by a committee strictly provisional and of which the districts must preserve the right to choose members¹. The question first presented itself upon the legality of the permanent committee, which, as was argued, had been named by citizens of all classes who happened to be in the Hôtel de Ville on the morning of the thirteenth. It was at once acknowledged that even the electors who were in the committee exercised a doubtful authority, because they had been chosen to elect deputies to the States-General, and not to administer municipal affairs. The result of the discussion was the appointment of a commission to present a plan for a "provisional committee", "which should unite to the legality of its powers a wise distribution of all municipal functions". According to ordinary principles of law this could not be done without the coöperation of the king in his council or at least of the National Assembly. The old régime and its legal basis was, however, destroyed, and for it was substituted the theory of local popular sovereignty in an extreme form.

In his attempt to organize the new military power Lafayette pointed the way to the electors, who were soon forced by popular agitation to follow. If the new organization were to be legal, he said, it must be agreed upon with him by the deputies of all the districts, who should bring to the Hôtel de Ville the general wish of the commune. At the same time he asked that the new force be called the "garde nationale de Paris". His suggestions were at once voted. Within three days this committee was organized, and, after ten days of hard work, it had the most important titles of the new regulation ready to submit to the districts for adoption, subject to such changes as experience might suggest.² The promptitude and energy with which it accomplished this work, so vitally important to the preservation of peace in Paris and even to the performance of the ordinary duties of police, is in strange contrast with the inability of the mayor and the assembly to bring anything definite to pass and to extricate themselves from the circle of their own disputes. It is true their task was more general and they were constantly interrupted by a multitude of administrative questions.

¹ *Extrait du procès-verbal . . . des Cordeliers, 14 juillet* (Bibl. Nat., pièce).

² *Procès-verbal de la formation et des opérations du comité militaire de la ville de Paris* (Bibl. Nat., pièce).

On the eighteenth Bailly and Lafayette asked the electors that their designation as mayor and commandant be confirmed by popular vote. Lafayette also suggested that the wishes of the citizens be obtained concerning the composition of the new municipal body. Without waiting for the report of their commission, the electors adopted a plan, only to change it at the evening session on the same day. Although they did not settle the entire question, it was decided to transform the permanent committee into a provisional committee and to ask each district to choose one member two days later.¹ This decree was sent to the districts the next morning. Already there were various independent schemes in circulation which would cause it to be regarded with circumspection. As one copy was made to do duty for several districts, the reception was even more lukewarm than might otherwise have been expected. In two or three districts there were indorsed on the copy questions as to its legality and complaints about the manner or the promptitude of delivery. One district declined to receive it at all because it was not signed by at least three electors. Most of the officials simply noted its delivery and declared its contents would be laid before the assemblies². Before stating the result of this attempt to solve the problem, it is necessary to explain the independent plans which were its rivals.

Éthis de Corny had endeavored to identify himself thoroughly with the new régime. He had taken a prominent part in the events of the fourteenth. He now turned to the districts and, making use of the formulæ of his old position as law-officer, "required" them in view of the stagnation of affairs and the lack of uniformity in their management to name one or several members, who were to form a committee empowered to maintain order and provide for necessary business. He argued that the permanent committee was in reality provisional, and that the mission of the electors was indeed terminated, as several of them had publicly declared. This requisition was printed and sent to each district³. Even if it did not fulfil its author's purpose, it served to show the districts that the solution of the problem was in their hands and that the electors could not settle it summarily.

Another plan destined to have complete success in its main features originated in the committee of the Filles Saint-Thomas, of

¹ *Procès-verbal*, II, 122-123, 128-129, 135-136.

² The several copies of the decree, with the list of the districts at which each was to be exhibited, and with the indorsements or comments of the district officials who saw them, are preserved in Arch. Nat. C 134, dossier 6, folios 27-32.

³ Bibl. Nat., Mss. fr. nouv. acq. 2683.

which Brissot was president. This plan differed from the one he had suggested on the thirteenth, for much had happened since that time. The committee proposed that as the permanent committee had not received the approbation of the citizens, each district should choose two deputies, forming a committee of 120, to be associated, if the districts wished, with the permanent committee in the task of maintaining public order, and, in concert with Bailly and Lafayette, to agree upon a municipal constitution for Paris, which should be reported to the districts for their approval¹. This document was at once sent to all the districts. It was adopted on the same day, with a few changes which rendered it more hostile to the permanent committee, by the general assembly of Saint-Germain des Prés, and its influence can be traced in the action of other districts². Its final results were apparent only several days later.

Even had the new provisional committee been organized, it is doubtful if the electors would have been allowed to remain as an assembly at the Hôtel de Ville. It had occurred to sixteen districts to send their delegates new powers, but so simple a method of constituting a temporary administration was distasteful to the majority, especially to the eager politicians who hoped to succeed the electors³. Moreover, the provisional committee was never formed. Several districts chose their members, but others, perhaps confused by the letter of Éthis de Corny or preferring the plan suggested by Brissot, sent to the Hôtel de Ville from two to eight delegates. This affair did not have time to work itself out before Bailly, imitating Lafayette's example for the military organization, and doubtless with the Brissot plan before his eyes, proposed a plan of his own, which soon led to a solution.⁴

¹ *Arrêtés du Comité général du dist. des Filles Saint-Thomas. Du 18 juillet* (Bibl. Nat., pièce). Cf. a *Délibération de l'assemblée générale* of same district, July 21 (Bibl. Nat., pièce).

² *Extrait des délibérations (18 juillet, 1789)* (Bibl. Nat., pièce). A comparison of the two decrees shows that the decree of Saint-Germain des Prés was the Filles Saint-Thomas decree with erasures and additions.

³ Bailly says, "beaucoup de personnes les voyaient avec peine, c'est-à dire avec envie, administrer les affaires. Chaque district administrait dans son arrondissement ; ceux qui y primaient avaient l'ambition de s'élever à l'administration générale". *Mémoires*, II, 125. Bailly's later chagrins may have predisposed him to look unfavorably upon these eager ambitions. Quénard and Godard write in the same tone. Even Loustallot later appeared to regret the electors when the new statesmen gained control ; see *Révolutions de Paris*, no. VII.

⁴ M. Lacroix in his notes, *Actes de la Commune de Paris*, I, 17-19, also shows that the *comité provisoire* never came into existence. He remarks that the list furnished by Robiquet, *Personnel Municipal de Paris*, 33, is the list of the military committee organized July 19. But his own account of the matter is incomplete, because he has not noticed several of the documents in the case. He asks which of the two decrees, morning or evening, was executed. The copies of the decision sent on the nineteenth to the districts answer the question. They give both decrees, the afternoon decree as

Bailly did not intend to take the administration immediately out of the hands of the electors. The function of the proposed committee of 120 was first to work with Lafayette and with himself in drawing up a plan of municipal administration which was to be put into effect provisionally and later modified as the views of the districts might indicate. Bailly believed that the executive power should be left to a small body of officials, and he had no desire to replace one large assembly by another almost as large.¹ The electors understood the mayor to mean that they were to remain at the Hôtel de Ville until a new plan of government had been adopted. The districts had no such notion. In most instances they gave their new delegates powers broader than had been suggested. A few seem to have thought that the two assemblies could coexist; others were determined to have done with the electors at once, looking upon them as ambitious men anxious to preserve their positions. Some went so far as to compel their own electors to withdraw and to forbid the new delegates to take part in any committees at which electors should continue to appear. In the National Assembly Mirabeau treated these unhappy men as simple individuals without mission.²

correcting that of the morning (Arch. Nat. C 134, dossier 6, folios 27-32). The afternoon decree did not, as M. Lacroix supposes, remain merely a project. He remarks that only one district, Saint-Etienne du Mont, named a deputy to this committee, although the Récollets did so unmistakably (Arch. Nat. C 134, dossier 7) as well as Sainte-Élizabeth (*ibid.*, folios 15, 32, and *Procès-verbal*, II, 181) and Saint-Louis en l'Isle (Bibl. Nat. Mss. fr. nouv. acq. 2680). Moreover the Mathurins and Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois decided to choose two, one not being enough (*ibid.*, 2696, fol. 51). It cannot be argued that if the districts chose more than one deputy they did not have in mind the *comité provisoire*, because in April they had sent more deputies to the electoral assembly than the rules allowed. Judging from the evidence in the Mathurins and in the Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois cases, any district that ventured to send two or more deputies to be in the bureaux into which the *comité provisoire*, like the permanent committee, would naturally be divided, intended to send the *comité provisoire*. Accordingly it is necessary to add the Bonne-Nouvelle (*Extrait de la Délibération*, 20 juillet, Bibl. Nat.), Petits-Pères (Arch. Nat. C 134, dossier 6, fol. 12), Saint-Roch (Bibl. Nat. Mss. fr. nouv. acq. 2665, fol. 21). One or two others might be added without a great stretch of the imagination. The Oratoire was confused by the several schemes in circulation and sent a deputation to the mayor to ascertain the wishes of the majority of the districts "sur la députation à former pour la composition du comité permanent" (Arch. Nat. C 134, dossier 9, fol. 22). It may be added that the permanent committee in order to attenuate the suggestions of their title on the nineteenth crossed out on their printed forms the word "Permanent" and substituted "Provisoire." In a day or two the committee used new stationery from which the offending word had disappeared altogether.

¹ In his letter he speaks of Lafayette and himself as "les seuls représentants constitués légalement par élection libre et par la confirmation que nous avons sollicités". *Actes*, I, 407. It appears that when Bailly wrote his memoirs he had forgotten that in this letter he had associated Lafayette with himself as those with whom the 120 were to work. *Mémoires*, II, 125, 143.

² *Procès-verbal de l'Assemblée Nationale*, for July 23, p. 14; for July 24, pp. 11, 12. Dix-Neuvième Lettre du Comte de Mirabeau à ses Commettans (*Courrier de Pro-*

The new committee or assembly which Bailly had called into existence was organized on the twenty-fifth.¹ In its message of thanks to the electors for the services they had rendered, it intimated that they were to remain in power only until the work could be provided for. Since these hints failed to convince them that their assembly was soon to be dissolved, after four days the new deputies, supported by the more demonstrative of the district politicians, voted that they should present themselves in a body in the hall of the electors, thank them for their wise and courageous conduct, and inform them that the new assembly had received power to administer the affairs of the city, and that it was ready to assume the functions it had asked the electors to exercise temporarily.²

The electors were destined to disappear in a violent political storm, victims of their own generous sentiments. A few days before they had been the helpless witnesses of two more murders.³ Foullon, a member of the short-lived July ministry, and his son-in-law, Bertier, the intendant of Paris, accused of the newly-invented crime of *lèse-nation*, had been literally torn in pieces. Now apparently it was to be the turn of another royal officer, the Baron de Besenval, who had commanded the troops on the twelfth and the thirteenth. With the king's express permission he had attempted to gain Switzerland, his native land, but had been arrested and was being brought to Paris. Necker on his return journey to Versailles had learned of Besenval's arrest and, although he could not procure his release, he had stopped for the moment his transfer to Paris. Necker also

vence), pp. 51-52. Bailly thought Mirabeau was coquetting with the districts in order to replace him as mayor. *Mémoires*, II, 154-155. For reply of electors, see *Procès-verbal*, II, 479-491.

¹ The records of the assembly, carefully edited by S. Lacroix, *Actes de la Commune de Paris*, I. M. Lacroix has added invaluable notes, giving many extracts from documents impossible to obtain outside of Paris. His work serves as a sure guide to students of Revolutionary Paris.

² *Procès-verbal*, II, 531-533, *Actes*, I, 38, 40. It should be noted that many of the electors had been chosen to the new assembly and that others remained in committees for months in spite of the protest of several districts whose suspicions of every phase of incipient aristocracy were stronger than their appreciation of the value of experience in the work of administration.

³ The electors and Mayor Bailly were not without some responsibility for these murders. Bailly frankly confesses in his memoirs his own desire to avoid compromising himself. One's impression in reading his account of the matter is that he was a coward and knew it. See especially *Mémoires*, II, 89. He adds that "There was a real danger in speaking the language of justice and humanity and it was useless to brave this danger". *Ibid.*, 117, 123. Lafayette, who was a brave man, but whose action was hampered by a remarkably acute consciousness of popularity, wrote years later that there was at the time "no other means of repression than personal ascendancy" and that there were in the city about 6,000 deserters and 30,000 vagabonds. *Mémoires*, II, 275. Cf. Godard, *Exposé*, 3.

seized the opportunity of his own triumphal reception in Paris to protest before the new assembly and before the electors against proscriptions and to plead Besenval's right to proceed to Switzerland. The deputies, moved by the appeal, instantly voted that Besenval be allowed to avail himself of the king's permission. Two deputies volunteered to carry the order. Necker repeated his appeal to the electors, who were still more deeply stirred by it. They declared in the name of the inhabitants of the capital that Paris pardoned all her enemies, and they further declared that only those were enemies of the nation who by excesses disturbed the public order¹. This extraordinary proceeding drew upon the electors a cloud of condemnation. The city was in an uproar. The district of the Oratoire, urged on by a crowd of spectators, passed a decree nullifying the acts of both the assembly and the electors and despatched a courier to prevent Besenval's release. Another district sent a deputation to the National Assembly to protest against the scheme of amnesty, which it attributed to the electors. Both the electors and the assembly, frightened at the uprising of the revolutionary element, either repealed or attenuated their decrees. It was in the midst of the echoes of this uproar that the electors finally disappeared from the scene as an organized body.²

VI.

It must not be inferred that the electors had since the sixteenth or seventeenth of July been concerned chiefly with the question whether they should remain at the Hôtel de Ville or be replaced by a new assembly of deputies. Undoubtedly they could have more readily solved this problem had not the burden of administering the city and of reëstablishing normal conditions rested upon them or upon their committees of police and subsistence. One of the dangers to the peace of the city was the presence of so large a number of unemployed workmen and of vagabonds who had armed themselves during the first days of the Revolution and who were the ever-ready recruits of each recurring mob. The troubles had paralyzed business and had interrupted industry. It had become difficult for

¹ Bailly had with characteristic timidity advised Necker not to raise so delicate a question. For the record of the new assembly's action, see *Actes*, I, 46-52.

² Gorsas, *Courrier de Versailles à Paris*, no. XXV; *Révolutions de Paris*, no. III, 352 ff. Mirabeau again criticized the electors in the National Assembly, *Courrier de Provence*, no. XXI. The new assembly sent a deputation to the National Assembly, asking for a special tribunal to try such cases as Besenval's, particularly in order that the people might not permit themselves "aucun acte capable de détruire des preuves importantes, en troublant l'ordre indispensable pour les obtenir," that is, put less euphemistically, should not murder men on mere suspicion. *Actes*, I, 62.

employers to receive back their workmen, who for lack of bread drifted toward vagabondism. To leave a large body of such men armed was dangerous. And it was not safe to allow them to pass the barriers and spread themselves through the country, as they were likely to do if the work of disarmament was unwisely begun. It was first settled that all such persons should be disarmed at the barriers. To settle the larger question a method was adopted for all the districts which had been proposed in the district of Saint-Germain des Prés. A notice was posted that the district would buy the guns of all workmen who would bring a certificate that they had returned to work. From July 20 to August 3 a single district purchased 250 muskets and twelve pistols.¹

Another danger grew out of the fact that the courts had ceased to act. The prisons were rapidly being filled with persons arrested on suspicion. The engineers of disorder had little fear that they would be swiftly called to account. To correct the evil the electors on the twentieth formally sent several prisoners to the Châtelet with the request that justice take its ordinary course.² In order to reassure the public mind, constantly alarmed by rumors of plots and insurrections, they also ordered that the theaters be reopened in spite of the threat of several districts to prevent this by force until after Necker's return.³

Although their retention of power was so brief, they were obliged to regulate provisionally the liberty of the press. The permanent committee had authorized the admission to the city of all pamphlets and newspapers. Some of these had proved to be virulent libels. Accordingly the electors laid down the principle "that every citizen is free to print and publish any work whatsoever, if he signs it and is ready to answer for it". When libels began to circulate touching the king himself, they specifically recalled the permission so freely

¹ *Procès-verbal*, II, 125, 157-158. Cf. purchases by Saint-Roch, Bibl. Nat. Mss. fr. nouv. acq. 2670, fol. 55.

² *Procès-verbal*, II, 235, 281-282. Cf. Brissot's *Patriote français* for July 30, p. 3. Many of the arrests had been ordered by the committee of police, one of the four bureaux of the permanent committee, which continued in power nearly four months. One of its members afterward described its action as "the justice of savage peoples, exercised by enlightened men, who were not allowed a moment for reflection and to whom would not have been pardoned the slightest uncertainty or the least delay". This member was Fauchet, who perished with the Girondins in 1793. His reminiscences were given to Godard, *Exposé*, 12-15. The operations of the committee were not so favorably regarded by all, for example, the royalist writer Rivarol in *Journal Politique-National des États-Généraux*, I, 150-151. He spoke of the Parisians demolishing the Bastille with one hand and with the other filling the prisons with poor bourgeois about whom the royal government had never concerned itself.

³ *Procès-verbal*, II, 193-194, 229-230.

given by the committee and ordered the arrest of all distributors of printed matter upon which the name of the printer did not appear, and that the printers should be held responsible in cases where the author was not known, a decree that excited lively protests.¹

The most serious problem was the food supply. This was intrusted to the committee on subsistence, but the electors themselves were obliged to lend their aid. One of the greatest difficulties was the pillaging of convoys of wheat on the Rouen road and the stopping by district officers of grain wagons sent out to Corbeil and other mill towns. Moreover the agents whom the government had formerly employed in supervising the grain supply were now discredited and in actual danger of being murdered. All dealers in grain were likewise in terror. The farmers kept their wheat in their barns because they feared that if they attempted to market it they would be plundered on the road. Before Necker had been dismissed, the government had been buying abroad and selling at a daily loss of 1,800 livres, in spite of the fact that bread was at fourteen and a half sous for four pounds. In the midst of the trouble the increasing distress in Paris led the multitude to cry out for cheaper bread. The committee on subsistence, alarmed at the situation, recommended that the price be reduced to twelve sous, and Bailly, although he disapproved such action, since it would increase the daily cost to the government to a total of from 25,000 to 30,000 livres, signed the measure to please the people and to "merit its confidence". The electors, however, were unwilling to go so far, and voted that the price should be thirteen and one-half sous. Even this concession was burdensome, because, owing to the disorder and especially to the armed intervention of the faubourgs, the collection of the octroi could not be fully reëstablished, so that three weeks later the government was losing about 40,000 livres a week².

After the victory of Paris over the king and his advisers the city became a power greater than the prostrate and disorganized monarchy, and for a time the rival of the National Assembly itself. Towns, particularly those in its neighborhood, asked for authority to form a citizen guard or to reorganize their government. The

¹ *Ibid.*, 185, 353-354, 367-368. Cf. *Révolutions de Paris*, no. IV, pp. 9-11. The committee of police forbade publications of engravings that had not been approved by Robin, of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture. *Journal de Paris*, August 3.

² *Procès-verbal*, II, 168-169, 256-268, 283-285, 432-433; Bailly, *Mémoires*, II, 96-98, 148, 252; Gorsas, *Courrier de Versailles*, no. XVI. On August 20 threats were made in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine to oppose force by force if the municipality attempted an effective collection. *Actes*, I, 288-289. Smugglers and petty traders, and the poor generally, saw in these taxes an intolerable burden.

electors uniformly disclaimed jurisdiction and limited themselves to advice simply¹.

The period during which the electors directed the affairs of Paris was so short and so occupied either with the defense of the city and the restoration of order or with the puzzling question of giving themselves successors that there was little opportunity for purely municipal problems to be discussed. The antagonism which was later to arise between the central assembly and the district assemblies or between the central assembly and the mayor did not have time to develop. What appeared most clearly therefore was the determination of the Paris bourgeoisie to have some part in the management of their own affairs rather than await quietly the remedies which might be proposed in the States-General. It is also clear that the men they chose to represent them were conservative, partly it may be through a natural fear of assuming an unwonted responsibility, but partly also through a habitual respect for established authority. The curious way in which this respect is mingled with extreme revolutionary theories and sentiments is not the least interesting of the phenomena. No one can read the story of these days without thinking it fortunate that the electors had decided to remain in session after their proper work was completed, for, had they not been ready to assume direction, the confusion must have been far more serious and its results disastrous.

HENRY E. BOURNE.

¹For examples see *Procès-verbal*, II, 186-187, 192-193, 217, 219-220.